time to rectify. In case, there is delay due to negligence of staff, disciplining of staff through administrative action is prescribed.

Telephone connections in rural areas of U.P

4603. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps are being taken by Government to provide telephone connections in the rural areas of the country particularly in the State of Uttar Pradesh; and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) As per the objectives of 9th five year plan, telephones will be provided on demand in all the rural and urban areas by March, 2002. Planning is being done to install telephone exchanges and provide reliable media keeping this objective in view. In the far-off rural areas, telephone connections are proposed with the help of WLL technology.

During the year 2000-2001, about 403 new telephone exchanges and 226 WLL equipment and 27,000 VPTs have been planned in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh.

(b) Does not arise in view of reply to para (a) above.

Expansion of Telecom Services in Rural Areas

4604. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have taken a decision to expand the telecom services in the rural areas;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the private companies have so far provided phones to only five villages as against a target of 18,000;

(c) if so, what are reasons for this massive shortfall; and

(d) whether anyone has been made accountable for this failure?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Out of six private companies only one company *viz* M/s BTNL has provided phones to 12 villages in Madhya Pradesh.

(c) and (d) It has been observed that the investment by the companies have so far been intentionally made in urban areas only. Private companies have been insisted upon to submit and adhere to a definite time-bound quarter-wise roll out plan for clearing the backlog of missed targets expeditiously. There will not be any dilution in their committed obligations under the licence agreements.

Backlog of Telephones in Madhya Pradesh

4605. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications for telephones connections which are lying pending in the OYT/NON-OYT category in each Telecom Division of Madhya Pradesh;

(b) since when these are lying pending; and

(c) what action are afoot to clear the backlog?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) There are no applicants for telephone connections pending in OYT category in Madhya Pradesh (as on 31-3-2000). Details of number of applicants pending in NON-OYT category are given in the enclosed Statement (*See* below).

(b) Total waiting list as on 31-3-2000 in MP circle is 40534. Majority of the waiting list is of less than one year period. However, there are some cases pending for longer duration due to technical reasons.

(c) Action is being taken to augment exchange capacity and external plant of all the exchanges and backlog is likely to be cleared by the end of March, 2001 subject to the availability of equipment.